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USA TODAY

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SECTION: NEWS

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HEADLINE: More and more firms adopt smoking policies

BODY:

Robert Rosner, 33, is executive director of the Seattle-based Smoking Policy Institute, a non-profit organization that works with businesses on the issue of smoking. He was interviewed by USA TODAY's Barbara Reynolds.

USA TODAY: Isn't the issue of smoking at work a relatively new concern for business?

ROSNER: I started on the issue eight years ago and I have seen an incredible increase in interest on smoking policies at work.

USA TODAY: You advise employers. What do they ask you?

ROSNER: They realize that there are problems associated with smoking in the workplace. Companies are getting complaints from employees, and they have decided that they need to do something.

USA TODAY: What do you advise them?

ROSNER: We go through a problem-solving approach of looking at their facilities, and looking at their ventilation system and their people, and we try to determine the best policy for their needs.

USA TODAY: Do you have an example of a company that has banned smoking?

ROSNER: Pacific Northwest Bell introduced a total ban on smoking in the workplace five years ago.

USA TODAY: What was the reaction of the employees?

ROSNER: The company recently did a survey and asked employees, is our policy right? And 70% agreed it was right. It then asked how many thought that it was not strict enough, and 19% said it was not.

USA TODAY: Weren't a lot of smokers angry?

ROSNER: What's interesting in this study was that 60% of the smokers said the ban on smoking was adequate.

USA TODAY: Are you finding that more companies are refusing to hire workers who smoke?

ROSNER: Not really. The number for that has remained quite constant. We very strenuously advise companies not to refuse to hire smokers. And there are

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companies that say you can't smoke outside of our building, and I think that is wrong. Once an employee goes home, why be concerned about that? My position is that once an employee leaves the building or is on his own time, smoking is irrelevant.

SUBJECT: SMOKING; EMPLOYEE

NOTES: Accompanies; Topic; SMOKING AT WORK; There's no doubt; we must ban smoking

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